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SUBJECT Discussing the Increase in Espionage

TED KOPPEL: From the A-bomb of 40 years ago to the most sophisticated undersea weaponry of today, what has motivated Americans to steal U.S. military secrets for the Soviet?

Good Evening. I'm Ted Koppel in Washington, and this is "Nightline."

Our topic, the Walker family spy case and its role in the continuing cloak and dagger war between the CIA and the KGB.

Our guests include a former Deputy Director of the CIA, and from the Federal Penitentiary at Marion, Illinois, Christopher Boyce, the so-called "Falcon" of "Falcon and the Snowman" fame, now serving 40 years for spying for the Soviets.

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It's an endlessly fascinating subject, this business of espionage, but in truth it must be said that we rarely know whether what we are reporting is accurate. Those, after all, who are in a position to know are professional dissemblers. They are trained to deceive, so that when, for example, we report on the Walker family and its alleged espionage successes against the United States in behalf of the Soviet Union, we don't really know how successful the Walkers may have been.

U.S. and Soviet intelligence experts, after all, are continually playing mind games with one another.

With that cautionary note in mind, here's "Nightline"

correspondent Jed Duvall with a look at what's been made public.

JED DUVALL: John Walker, age 47, 21-year Navy veteran, arrested as a spy for the Soviet Union.

Michael Walker, age 22, Navy Yeoman, devoted to his dad, John Walker, arrested as a spy for the Soviet Union.

Arthur Walker, age 50, John's older brother, 20 years in the U.S. Navy, arrested as a spy for the Soviet Union.

Jerry Whitworth, age 45, 27 years in the Navy, arrested as a spy for the Soviet Union.

All four born and raised in America. On the surface, loyal citizens, good sailors, but for years it is alleged the four have been supplying Soviet agents with U.S. Navy secrets.

[Drum roll].

For decades, the United States and Soviet Union have played a deadly game of tag beneath the oceans, especially the North Atlantic and Mediterranean, how to find the submarines of the other side and how to hide one's own under sea boats.

The backbone of this part of the competition between the super powers is secrecy, secrecy of techniques and technology, how to hear the other subs, how to keep one's own quiet enough to avoid detection.

The three Walkers and Jerry Whitworth all had in varying degrees access to information on codes and submarine warfare tactics.

ADMIRAL GENE LaROCQUE [Center for Defense Information]: It would be relatively simple for either Mr. Walker or his son on board ship to put away various bits of information with the duplicating processes on ships. They can make copies, put them away and mail them debt free any time they wish.

DUVALL: John Walker, identified as the ring leader, may have been passing classified documents for 15 or 20 years. FBI agents arrested him at this hotel near Washington, D.C., two weeks ago. That came after Walker was seen dropping a bag by the side of this road. The bag contained 129 secret Navy documents.

Two days later, his son, Michael, was arrested aboard the U.S.S. Nimitz where he had access to secret communications. Next to his bunk, authorities found 15 pounds of classified documents.

Arthur, the older brother, a retired Lieutenant

Commander, has been employed by V.S.E. Corporation, a defense contractor. He has reportedly told authorities he got 12,000 dollars from John Walker for turning over plans, photographs, documents and files that he understood were to be given to Soviet agents.

Whitworth was a communicatioins specialist at the Alameda Naval Air Station near Oakland, California, and may have stolen secret materials from that base.

Was money the motive? The FBI says in court papers that Whitworth made, quote, "big bucks," but the FBI investigation of John Walker, the apparent ring leader, has indicated the largest single payment to him was 35,000 dollars.

Associates of John Walker say money was not the most important consideration.

WOMAN [Voice Disguised]: If he did this, and apparently he did this, then it would have had to have been for his ego so he could feel like he was a super spy, and I don't really think that he did it for the money.

DUVALL: This woman, a government employee, fears for her job lest she be seen on television. She once worked for John Walker's private detective agency.

WOMAN: I sensed he had a hatred for the Navy. I sensed he had a hatred for his partner. I sensed he had -- he had a hatred for his family. I sensed that his relationship with his girl friend and his son were one where they were for his pleasures -- for his needs.

DUVALL: Roberta Puma is another who once worked for John Walker.

ROBERTA PUMA: You know, he'll go to any lengths to impress, and I've seen that already. It seemed like, you know, that's just his personality.

[Musical Theme of "James Bond."]

DUVALL: Johnny Walker, as he was often called, apparently fostered the dashing image of himself. He was featured on the program "PM Magazine" a year-and-a-half ago as a spy.

PM MAGAZINE HOST: Danger, action and intrigue. These are the ingredients of prime time tv's detective dramas.

DUVALL: To be specific, as a private investigator

specializing in industrial counterspy, protecting business customers.

[Clip of John Walker].

JOHN WALKER: First of all, what we're trying to do is we'll go through with the device such as this and search for bugs radiating transmitters first.

Secondly, we will check the phone electronically for taps.

[End clip].

DUVALL: All this time, Johnny Walker often boasted of his patriotism, cussed out communists while allegedly passing to them this country's secrets.

During the decades of submarine competition between the United States and Soviet Union, it has been the U.S. with clear advantage, especially in detection capabilities. The Soviets have more submarines, but America has had a lead in how to find and how to hide.

But now, the Navy cannot know how much it has been harmed by what the Walkers are said to have done.

MICHAEL BURCH [Pentagon Spokesman]: We feel that we still have a qualitative edge over the Soviets in sub service operations, but we're still assessing the amount of damage that may have been done.

DUVALL: Clearly, the Walker case is significant. The nation's military posture has been damaged to an extent that may never be known. And, oddly, the chief motivation of the alleged spy ring may have been neither money nor ideology, as in many other spy cases, but simply the ego of Johnny Walker, Private Eye.

Jed Duvall, for "Nightline," from Washington.

KOPPEL: When we come back, we'll talk live with one of the U.S. Senate's leading authorities on military and intelligence matters, Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, and with Admiral Bobby Inman, former Deputy Director of the CIA.

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KOPPEL: Joining us live now from his office on Capitol Hill, Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and from our affiliate KVUE in Austin,

Texas, Admiral Bobby Inman, former Deputy Director of the CIA.

Admiral Inman, I guess it's just my innate skepticism, but every time I hear people in high office start talking about the enormous, the incredible, the incalculable damage that has been done by one secrety break or another, I start asking myself why are they being so good to the Russians? What are they telling them? What a huge secret breakthrough this was, unless maybe they're trying to engage in a little bit of reverse English.

ADMIRAL BOBBY INMAN: Ted, every spy case hurts. It confirms facts. The real extent of damage depends on how bad the access was. Even from this great distance with no details beyond what I read in the media, this is a very alarming case because there are a number of people who have a whole variety of different accesses.

One of the major ways we try to protect information --and with this huge number of people who are cleared -- is to compartment access, to limit the access any single individual might have. It looks at this point as though we've got access to submarine operations, to surface ship operations, amphibious operations, the carrier operations, and some indication of what knowledge we had about Soviet ship movements. Put those all together and it's bound to be damaging on a fairly large scale.

KOPPEL: Are you prepared to accept that that was in any respect a coincidence that each member of the Walker family and this other fellow here who is not a member of the Walker family, and whoever this fifth person is that we don't know about yet --that each of them had access to a different piece of the puzzle? Or would that be consistent with the way the KGB would operate in terms of trying to gain access to different people?

ADMIRAL INMAN: When they have one agent who's already gained access, over a time they'll try to develop through him the potential to get at other targets. From looking simply at the places where John Walker was assigned, there were clearly tours when he had the opportunity to screen other potential individuals to pull into his spy network.

So, trying to place people in an entirely different areas of access were no doubt planned by the KGB.

KOPPEL: Senator Nunn, my understanding is that there are roughly 4,300,000 Americans who have access to classified information of one degree or another. Only about five or six years ago that number was considerably less, somehwere around three million. Why is it necessary for so many people to have so much access to so much classified information?

SENATOR SAM NUNN: Well, Ted, I don't think it is necessary. I think the kind of system we've got now simply cannot work with 4.2 million people having to be cleared. It bogs down the system. It causes the original background checks not to be very thorough. Many times they just go with what we call a "National Agency Check." It causes the adjudication procedure to be too casual, in my view, and most of all it prevents the kind of reclearance procedures necessary for top secret cleared people and above that's supposed to occur every five years, but is now backed up some 10 years.

So, the system simply won't work the way it is now.

KOPPEL: Whose repsonsibility is it to clear these 4.2 million people?

SENATOR NUNN: Well, if I were a taxpayer out there and I would ask that question, I would say that it's the government's responsibility -- whoever the government is. That includes the President. That includes the Department of Defense. It includes the national security apparatus, our intelligence community, and it certainly includes the Congress. All of us are responsible.

KOPPEL: Well, actually I wasn't asking you in a -- in an accusatory manner. I was asking you from a very practical point of view. In other words, you've got 4.2 million people who've got to be cleared every five years in theory. Where's the manpower for that? Who's supposed to do it?

SENATOR NUNN: Well, we have several different agencies. We don't have a central clearing source. We have the Defense Security Agency. We have the Office of Personnel Management. We have some State Department Security going, and the adjudication -- that is the procedure once the information and background is derived by an investigation then someone has to decide whether that background should permit that individual to be cleared, and that adjudication procedure is even more diverse, including different methods and different agencies, and including in the Navy, as a matter of interest, each command makes separate decisions on adjudication, and usually that means each ship. So, we don't have a centralized procedure.

As far as the Federal Government's concerned, the Office of Personnel Management is the central focal point for this whole personnel security clearance. The Department of Justice headed by the Attorney General plays a vital role. Those two individuals are the primary people that have been designated by the President.

It's an interesting fact that a report has been made by them in the last year-and-a-half to the National Security Council, and the National Security Council has not acted on that

report. Now, in fairness to them, they have a lot of other things going on, but that group right now, the National Security Council, is acting on the President's behalf and that report's been sitting there a long time, so it's time for the National Security Council to take action, and there are a lot of recommendations there that I think deserve some consideration.

KOPPEL: Admiral Inman, one of the aspects of this case, the Walker case, that I must confess surprises me is that people of such relatively low standing -- that is, we're not talking here about Admirals. We're not talking about Vice Admirals. We're talking about people fairly low down on the -- on the pecking order that they would have access to material that could be so potentially damaging. Explain that to me, would you?

ADMIRAL INMAN: Ted, when you set out -- if you were set out to go recruit spies, the targets that would be most attractive to you are communications personnel, code clerks, the one who -- through whose hands most information passes and, indeed, that's where this success has occurred.

Now, even if you were to take those three million people -- 4.3 million people and cut them down to only a million cleared, that would not have eliminated either Walker or Whitmyer [sic], because you are still going to continue to clear the communications personnel.

Most of those are enlisted or were in civilian agencies. They're relatively lowly paid. They're also mostly very competent people.

Obviously, they're one of the first targets you have to look at in insuring that you've got the most stringent screening mechanisms in place against this kind of case.

KOPPEL: Are we always kind of a day late and a dollar short in these kinds of cases? I mean, is there -- I guess that in counter-intelligence successes, one of the problems is we don't hear about the counter-intelligence successes, but are we just a little more frivolous about this thing than we used to be? Are we a little less careful? Have things gotten easier? It just seems to me that there are more cases of this kind these days than there were 20 years ago.

SENATOR NUNN: Ted, I feel....

ADMIRAL INMAN: If you look to the times of the '30s, the '40s, most of the spy cases were individuals who did so for ideological reasons. In the last 15 years, there's not a single case of that that I'm aware of. It's selling secrets for cash.

Now, those who are out looking for those secrets to be sold, potential foreign case officers from the Soviet Union, from Eastern Europe and Cuba, the numbers of potential case officers in this country have more than doubled over the last 15 years.

In that same time frame, the number of counter-intelligence based on our side, both FBI and Defense, have gone down remarkably as we've been trying to save money.

KOPPEL: Senator Nunn, you were about to express an opinion.

SENATOR NUNN: Well, I would agree with what Admiral Inman has said. I would add to it that I think it's essential for us to cutdown that number of people, although he is probably correct in that the cutting down will not prevent cases like. It may not prevent cases we've seen before. But I believe with the increased numbers that we have now the system is so bogged down that the problems in the future are going to go up by an order of magnitude because they simply cannot cope with it and reinvestigations are essential, certainly for top secret classified people and above, and those simply cannot occur under the present procedures.

So, we have to start with those numbers, and I think we have to do other things like random searches. I think we have to try to have some real high-level research in this area. We might be able to develop the technology that will allow us to prevent copies from being made. We might be able to have technology that at least would prevent copies from being made without being able to trace them. And, of course, the mimeograph machine is one of the main ingredients in this whole espionage apparatus, and filming.

So, you are going -- you are going to have to do a lot of things differently, but it starts with the numbers. It simply can't be managed without that.

KOPPEL: All right, Senator Nunn, Admiral Inman, thank you both very much indeed.

In a moment, we're going to get kind of an insider's view. When we come back, our interview just concluded about an hour ago with Christopher Boyce now serving time in a federal prison for spying for the Soviet. Boyce is currently in 33rd month of solitary confinement.

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ANNOUNCER: Christopher Boyce was convicted in 1977 for selling defense secrets to the Soviets. Employed in the Code and Communications Center by TRW, a major CIA contractor, Boyce

admitted that for two years he sold CIA documents and plans for U.S. spy satellites to the Soviets for a reported 15,000 dollars. His career as a spy has been made famous by the movie, "The Falcon and the Snowman."

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KOPPEL: Joining us now from the Federal Penitentiary in Marion, Illinois, Christopher Boyce, sentenced to 40 years in prison for spying for the Soviet Union.

I know it must be anything but glamorous now. You've spent a lot of time in solitary confinement. You're in prison not just for 40 years, you're in for the next 68.

CHRISTOPHER BOYCE: Right.

KOPPEL: Because you had an escape in there. But, at one time or another it must have seemed awfully glamorous. At one time or another big money, excitement, spying for the Soviet Union, seductive?

BOYCE: Well, I certainly didn't know what it was going to be like before it actually started. I think I had the same view of espionage that -- that most young people in this country now have from -- from what they learn from the media and tv and -- and movies, and that's that espionage is a glamorous thing, but in reality it really is not.

KOPPEL: Well, tell me about what it is, then. Why is it not glamorous? I mean, apart from the fact that if you get caught you end up in the slammer as you did, but what is unglamorous about it?

BOYCE: Well, it's just not what people think it is. It's -- it's like picking up a 60-pound stone that you're never going to be able to set down. It's -- it's -- the KGB is forever, and what you do is you don't make yourself important, you just become a cattle to a -- to a foreign bureaucracy that really doesn't care about you, and that's just really interested in exporting you.

KOPPEL: Well, give me a sense -- that's an interesting line, "the KGB is forever." What do you mean by that? In -- how -- how did it become that for you?

BOYCE: Well, I -- they didn't ever want to see any end to it, and, you know, I think most people believe that the KGB is interested in collecting secrets in this country and I think that's, of course, one of their goals. But I think the long term

is the way that they look at the situation, and I think their long term goal is to actually influence policy, and that's what they want to get people to do, to go on and on and on. It's not something you can put down.

KOPPEL: Chris, there are four million, four-and-a-half million people in this country who have access to classified and highly classified information. You are talking to a number of them right now. What would you tell them?

BOYCE: I would tell them that they should discard all preconceptions that they have about espionage. Everything that they ever learned growing up, especially the young workers who are coming on line in the aerospace companies, they should just discard all -- all those beliefs they have about espionage that they learn from movies and books, because that's -- that's not what espionage is.

Espionage is something that -- that grabs you by the stomach and just holds you down and doesn't ever go away. It --it's -- the reality of espionage hits you about a week after it begins, and you just realize that you've blundered, and it's just something that you're going to have to carry around forever. It isn't going to ever end.

KOPPEL: Is it possible that that's just the way it hit Christopher Boyce and that other might be able to handle it in a different way?

BOYCE: No, I -- I think that for the overwhelming majority of Americans who ever had anything to do with the KGB, they immediately realize that they had made the blunder of their life. I don't think that anyone who -- as we sit here, I don't think that anyone who's involved with the KGB right now -- I --I don't think they're happy people. They're not.

You might get some -- you might get one or two, a small percentage. The overwhelming people [sic] are terribly shocked. It's like walking into a dark room and falling down a hole. It is just not what you think you're going to be -- to run into --from what everyone thinks espionage is.

And I think that that's the government's -- the best thing that the government can do to prevent espionage is to communicate truthfully to the four million Americans with security clearances exactly what espionage would mean to them personally as individuals, how it would poison their lives. And I think that if Americans really knew what espionage would do to their lives as individuals, I think espionage would then dry up like a corpse.

I think that the best weapon that the Federal Government has to combat espionage is the simple truth about the KGB. People just don't know.

KOPPEL: Well, obviously, these people have not yet had a trial, but if indeed the charges against them are true, this has been going on at least in the case of Walker, Sr., for some 18 years.

Now, can someone carry that kind of 60-pound weight that you're talking about for 18 years, or is it possible that some people genuinely do get some excitement, do get a thrill out of doing this kind of thing and perhaps don't even think about the consequences for their country?

BOYCE: No. Yes, ok, but I guarantee you it has -- it has twisted his life around so -- so much that for someone to pull their own flesh and blood into -- into a thing like that, to involve their son, there's something basically wrong with that person. It's one thing to blunder into it, but then to turn around and bring your own family -- I -- just -- I don't know what to say.

KOPPEL: How do you think they got him?

BOYCE: They got him because someone -- his wife turned him in, and that's how -- I mean, the government....

KOPPEL: Well, I don't mean how the FBI got into it, I mean how do you think the Russians got him initially?

BOYCE: Well, I probably think he went to them. But, that's mere speculation. I don't know.

KOPPEL: Why do people do that? I mean, that's exactly what you and your cohort did. They didn't come to you, you went to them.

BOYCE: I went to them because I was -- I was 21-years-old and I was so foolish I thought that the CIA was the enemy, and I thought that I would be able to manipulate the KGB into punishing what I thought was the enemy, the CIA.

I really didn't know what espionage was. But that's just not how it works.

The KGB is not something that a 21-year-old manipulates, you know. You're under their numb immediately, and when you realize that it just overwhelms your whole life, and everything that's important in a young man's life is just no longer -- you

don't even think about it because it -- this is just a weight that's dropped on top of you and....

If the four million Americans with security clearances really knew what espionage was and what it would do to them and what kind of burden they would have to carry, there wouldn't be any espionage, and the government is derelict in its duty if it does not communicate to the four million with security clearances -- that fact -- that should be done.

KOPPEL: Christopher Boyce, I think you';ve done it and done it very eloquently tonight. Thank you very much for talking with us. Very good.

BOYCE: Good night.

KOPPEL: I'll be back in a moment.

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KOPPEL: Just a word of apology and explanation to our affiliates.

That interview with Christopher Boyce was recorded just about 90 minutes ago then had to be jetted back from the Marion State Penitentiary to Chicago and then microwaved back to us. We got it just as we put it on the air. We thought it was worth carrying in its entirety.

But again, our apologies for running over.